

# ORM NEWS

From the Office of the  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Resolution Management  
Department of Veterans Affairs



February 2005

## *From the Deputy Assistant Secretary*



It is with great pleasure that I announce the return of Amber Fisher who has completed her tour of duty in Iraq. She has been reassigned to a stateside military installation pending her release from active duty and we look forward to Amber rejoining us here in ORM, particularly in Lyons. I want to take this time to commend Amber for her exceptional service to our Nation and to say how very happy we are for her safe return.

Next, I want to once again talk about the importance of having defined performance objectives and measures to ensure we accomplish our organizational mission. Each year, we prepare a work plan and performance measures that lay out what our objectives are and how we will accomplish them for the upcoming year. It is important that we have clearly defined measurable objectives and for you to know what they are. These objectives, listed on pages four and five, are mission critical and will be used to gauge our success at the end of the year. We also have a list of major performance measures for the year. They are shown on page six. These measures detail specific programs, system or training initiatives that address items listed in our performance objectives. Our success as an organization is dependent upon accomplishing our objectives; our performance measures are the means or actions that are being taken to accomplish these objectives.

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Informed employees who understand what they are doing and why they do it are the bases of successful organizations. Communicating our organizational objectives and performance measures to you is the first step in ensuring we, as an organization, know where we are going, how we will get there, and what markers are along the route. As we go through the year I will share more of this information with you. Feel free to contact your field or program manager or myself if you have questions about our objectives.

James S. Jones

# Program Highlights

## R. James Nicholson Secretary of Veterans Affairs



R. James “Jim” Nicholson was nominated by President George W. Bush to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs on December 9, 2004, and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on January 26, 2005. He was sworn into office on February 18, 2005. Secretary Nicholson’s biography is available on the VA intranet at <http://vaww1.va.gov/opa/bios/index.cfm>.

### **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for HR&A**

Gary Steinberg is the new Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A). Mr. Steinberg previously served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in HR&A.

### **Call Monitoring**

ORM has initiated a pilot program at the Washington Field Office to test the call monitoring system that will soon go into effect at all our field offices. The purpose of this monitoring system is to insure quality and consistency in the information provided by our employees during the counseling process to individuals seeking information or assistance in using the EEO complaint process. Additional information on the roll-out of this system will be provided at a later date. ■

### **Mediation Settlement Agreement**

ORM’s Office of Policy and Compliance has developed and issued a standardized mediation settlement. Use of this agreement will ensure consistency in the language used in settlement agreements arising out of mediations where ORM employees act as mediators. This agreement is available for use by other VA organizations. For more information contact the Office of Policy and Compliance. ■

## Mediation Training

Learning Resources is developing a mediation refresher course for ORM employees who received basic mediation training. A key component of this training will be “mock mediations” where individuals will be evaluated on their proficiency in using the skills taught in their previous training and acquired during actual mediations. For more information contact Learning Resources. ■

## Reminder: Root Cause Data

The Office of Policy and Compliance wants to remind EEO Counselors that they are required to make root cause selections for each case they process. In addition to being a required input for the Web Based Tracking System (WBTS), it is also the basis of a comprehensive Root Cause Report. The first report, using data input into the WBTS, will be generated in April and disseminated to each field office. For more information contact the Office of Policy and Compliance. ■

## VA's Consumer Affairs Service

Complaints concerning service and treatment at VA regional offices, medical centers, and cemeteries can be referred to VA's office of Consumer Affairs Service. Individuals calling with complaints about service at VA facilities can call the consumer hotline at (202) 273-5770 or they can mail their complaint to Department of Veterans Affairs, Consumer Affairs Service (075), 810 Vermont Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20420. Consumer Affairs will track the complaint and respond to the complainant.

In addition to Consumer Affairs Service, Veterans Benefits Administration's Office of Communication and Case Management handles calls from veterans and others who have complaints about difficulty with their VA benefits claims or service at VA regional offices. Callers with complaints concerning VA benefits claims or service at VA regional offices can be referred to the Office of Communication and Case Management at (202) 273-5674.

Individuals requesting general information about VA benefits programs should call 1 800 827-1000 or they can visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). ■

# **ORM 2005 Performance Objectives**



ORM has created a series of performance objectives to ensure we continue to improve the services we provide to our customers and meet our organizational goals. These objectives underlie our core services and provide clearly defined targets for the upcoming year. Our 2005 performance objectives are:

- ❖ Continue to work with the offices of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Dispute Resolution Specialist and the administrations to identify critical aspects of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) that are needed to increase ADR activity in field facilities.
- ❖ Average 180 days or less to complete investigations.
- ❖ Reduce the number of complaints pending more than 180 days.
- ❖ Survey at least 75% of our stakeholder.
- ❖ Average 30 days or less to complete counseling (without ADR).
- ❖ Average 90 days or less to complete counseling (with ADR).
- ❖ Facilitate increasing the percentage of complaints referred to ADR during the informal and formal stages of the process.
- ❖ Fully implement ORM's Electronic Case Management System (ECMS)
- ❖ Meet quality and timeliness requirements for executive correspondence.
- ❖ Provide effective resource management by ensuring that spending remains within the limitations set in ORM's Budget Operating Plan.
- ❖ Increase the use of video conferencing related to training and meetings.
- ❖ Collaborate with the administrations, Office of General Counsel (OGC) and Employee Education Service (EES) to develop employer of choice training for VA wide use.

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- ❖ **Create and implement an automated Customer Service Survey and Tracking System to monitor and identify out-of-line indicators and establish standard operating procedures for follow-up and corrective action through integration into the QA program. Provide quarterly reports of out-of-line indicators and best practices from customer service feedback.**
- ❖ **Assess need and provide “Reader Focused Writing” for ORM staff.**
- ❖ **Work with field facilities, EES, National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD) and OGC to enhance the value of the Root Cause Analysis report/newsletter to field facilities.**
- ❖ **Conduct training needs assessment for primary ORM occupations and provide training as indicated by the assessment.**
- ❖ **Sponsor at least two EEO conferences for specific geographic areas.**
- ❖ **Conduct at least 7 Organizational Climate Assessment Program (OCAP) assessments. (Contingent on the availability of funds)**
- ❖ **Train all VA Lead EEO Managers, ADR Coordinators regarding effective ADR program operations.**
- ❖ **Provide comparison data semi-annually to the administrations.**
- ❖ **Develop and implement an affirmative employment plan for ORM.**
- ❖ **Provide complaint prevention and early resolution training to the administrations in conjunction with OGC.**
- ❖ **Develop assessment methodology to measure the effect of ADR initiatives.**
- ❖ **Develop assessment methodology to measure the effect of the training.**
- ❖ **Develop assessment methodology to measure the effect of the OCAP survey.**
- ❖ **Develop assessment methodology to measure the effect of complaint prevention and early resolution initiatives.**

**For more information contact your field or program manager. ■**

# **ORM 2005 Performance Measures**

ORM has developed a series of performance measures for fiscal year 2005. These measures detail specific programs, system or training initiatives that address items listed in our performance objectives. Our performance objectives are what we will do and our performance measures are how we will do them.

- **Electronic Case Management System**  
Provide a comprehensive document management and complaint tracking system.
- **Develop vignettes to demonstrate and effective ADR session.**  
These vignettes will provide both managers and employees with examples of what an effective mediation session looks like.
- **Develop root cause vignettes**  
This prevention initiative will be used to demonstrate the value of identifying root causes of complaints where there is no finding of discrimination and in developing mechanisms to address these issues.
- **Implement a call-monitoring system in the counseling process.**  
Call monitoring will allow us to provide quality service to our customers.
- **Develop and roll out executive training on complaint process and early intervention and prevention techniques.**  
A critical part of expanding the use of mediation in the complaint process is obtaining buy-in from senior leadership. This training will facilitate that goal.
- **Increase ADR Participation to 20%.**  
In fiscal year 2004, ADR participation was 10.7%. ORM is working to increase that participation to 20% by the end of this fiscal year. The goal is to ultimately reduce the number of formal complaints filed by increasing the number of individuals using ADR to resolve their complaints.



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- **Increase the number of certified mediators in ORM to 10%.**  
Currently, 2% of ORM's employees are certified mediators. ORM is frequently asked by facilities to provide mediators. Additional employees will be trained and certified this fiscal year.
- **Train 40% of senior leadership on complaint process, early intervention and prevention techniques.**  
This training will facilitate management's understanding of the value of ADR in resolving EEO complaints and other workplace disputes.
- **Ensure 90% of VA employees are introduced to ADR as a resolution method.**  
In fiscal year 2004, 91% of VA employees were trained in the use of ADR to resolve work place disputes. The goal in 2005 is to maintain or improve this level of training.
- **Efficiency of Counseling, Procedural Reviews, and Investigations**  
EEO counseling without ADR must be completed in 30 days.  
Procedural Reviews must be completed in 60 days; and  
investigations must be completed in 180 days of the date of formal filing. ■

## **Speed Pay**

Did you know you can pay your Citibank travel account using Speed Pay (electronic funds transfer)?

To use Speed Pay, contact Citibank by telephone and ask to pay your Citibank travel account by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

For more information, contact Barbara Scott at (202) 501-2817.



# Office Notes

## Voluntary Leave Program

**David M. Betts**, EEO Regional Manager for Mid-Atlantic Operations, has been approved for the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP). If employees would like to donate annual leave to Mr. Betts, please complete VA Form 0239 and send it to Linda Hughes (05HR) at the HRC Human Resource Office. Please note that employees are prohibited from donating leave to their immediate supervisor. If you have any questions regarding the VLTP, please contact Ms. Hughes at (785) 350-3780. You can fax the form to Ms. Hughes at (785) 228-4935 or scan the document and send it to her by e-mail. The minimum amount of annual leave you may donate is four (4) hours and all donations are voluntary.

## Operation Lend a Helping Hand

Dianna Hannah, Homeless Veterans Coordinator, at VBA's Washington Regional Office, sent the following "Special Thanks" to **Denise Bond** on the DAS's staff, and the other employees of the DAS' office and the Washington Field Office for their support of "Operation Lend a Helping Hand" during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Food, clothes and other items were collected and presented to homeless veteran's families and others in the community.

Sometimes we browse through "Thank"  
you cards, and can simply never find,  
Enough words to express our thanks to  
people who have been so kind.

It didn't take me long at all, just a little  
while,  
To see that you have a heart of gold to  
make our Veterans smile.

It made me feel really good to know  
that you all were there and made our  
veterans special with your extra care.

It must be hard to listen to veterans  
with so many demands,  
but they know they are in good hands.

If you don't know by now, and maybe  
you've been told before,

that what you do is not just a job, but  
it is so much more.

We often get so busy just doing the  
things we do,  
that we sometimes forget to simply  
say; "Thank You."

So, to the ORM staff, you have been  
the best,  
thank you for making our veterans feel  
blessed.

And whenever you're in need and  
feeling a little blue,  
please know that you not only helped  
the veteran, but his family too.

So, on behalf of my Homeless veterans,  
I'm sending a special thank you from  
the bottom of my heart.

*Dianna M. Hannah*



# Did You Know?

## AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

### The History and Origins of African American History Month

Negro History Week was originally established in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a noted African-American author and scholar. This event evolved into the establishment, in 1976, of February as "Black History Month." This commemoration has increasingly been referred to as "African-American History Month" although both names are currently in use.

Since 1926, The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) has established the national theme for the month-long celebration of African American History Month. The National Theme for the celebration of Black History Month in the year 2005 marks the 100th anniversary of the Niagara Movement ... "The Niagara Movement: Black Protest Reborn, 1905 - 2005."

The Niagara Movement (1905-10), was an organization of black intellectuals led by W.E.B. DuBois calling for full political, civil, and social rights for black Americans. The Niagara Movement was the forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). ■

*Source is ASALH*

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